

SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

REPORT FO THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Strategic Priority 4: Learning City

Corporate Improvement Priority: Delivering Customer Focused Services, Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City'

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 This report is to update Committee on the report taken to cabinet in February 2009 and to outline the Stage 4 consultation currently being undertaken.

2. Background

- 2.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, to promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential, ensuring that there are sufficient schools in their area, and promoting diversity and increasing parental choice. Local authorities have a duty to take action when a school's surplus places are 25% or more. There is also an expectation that there should be no more than 10% surplus places across the City. In managing school places across the City the Council has made significant investment in new primary schools over recent years, both to better match school provision to the demographic trends experienced throughout Sunderland and to take the opportunity to modernise and improve school facilities. Since 1997 the following new schools have been built:

Primary – Dubmire, George Washington, Fatfield, Ryhope Infant, Ryhope Junior, St. Paul's CE Controlled, St. Michael's RC, Valley Road, Grangetown, Highfield, Easington Lane and Hetton Lyons. A new school at Southwick Primary has just opened in February 2009.

Secondary - Sandhill View, under a PFI arrangement, Venerable Bede. The BSF programme has so far achieved the complete refurbishment of Oxclose School, Biddick School is undergoing a significant refurbishment, the new building for Academy 360 is due for completion in September 2009, Hylton Red House and Castle View academies are due to open at the same time, Washington School is currently being completely rebuilt and St. Robert of Newminster refurbishment is due to commence in the near future.

Specials - Columbia Grange, Portland, Castle Green. Under the Primary Strategy for Change work on replacement of Maplewood is due to begin in 2010.

- 2.2 Despite the actions taken over a number of years the decline in pupil numbers continues to impact on the surplus place position, as set out in previous reports. Reconfiguring school provision has clear educational benefits in that achieving the appropriate size and location of schools has a beneficial impact upon schools' delivery of teaching and learning. It seeks to avoid the impact of decreasing economies of scale associated with reduction in

funding to individual schools associated with a decline in pupil numbers, given that 75% of funding that a school receives is based on pupil numbers. The resources available are stretched to maintain and run under occupied buildings, rather than on the direct delivery of education to pupils.

- 2.3 On 8 October 2008, Cabinet agreed that the proposed options involving the following schools be the subject of formal consultation:

Bernard Gilpin Primary
Gillas Lane Primary
Eppleton Primary
Hetton Primary
Hetton Nursery
Willow Fields Primary
Hylton Red House Primary
Hylton Red House Nursery
Southwick Primary
Grange Park Primary
Bexhill Primary
Town End Primary

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The consultation on options finished on 28 November 2008. The coverage of the consultation included:

Meetings with staff at each school
Meetings with governors at each school
Meetings with parents/carers at each school
Follow up meetings on request
Local press coverage
Meetings with Ward Members of affected schools
Regular updates to all Members
Regular updates to other schools
Notification of options and meetings to unions and Dioceses

- 3.2 Minutes of the public meetings were circulated to schools and made available on the Council's website. An analysis of responses for each school, including comments from the formal response forms, were included in the report to Cabinet. In most cases, the individual letters and other written responses mirrored these comments. However, any specific and significant issues raised were included in the options appraisals. In addition to responses from schools, responses were received from the NASUWT and the NUT teacher unions.

- 3.3 A detailed options appraisal was carried out for each of the clusters. Any major issues emerging from the consultation were also considered, as well as other factors operating within and across clusters. The options appraisals were included in the report to Cabinet.

- 3.4 The rationale and the proposals for each cluster are outlined at 3.4.1-3.4.5.

3.4.1 Hylton Red House cluster:

Synopsis of options appraisal:

Community - Can be delivered at other facilities within the locality and/or the new school.

Resourced provision - Speech and Language unit could be relocated to new school.

Buildings - The repair backlogs for both Hylton Red House and Willow Fields are significantly above the average for primary schools in the City and are amongst the highest in the city.

Previous actions - Willow Fields - reduced classrooms from 9 to 5 and still not a long term solution

Specialist bases - Willow Fields - In excess of what would be required in a modern 0.5 FE school.

Alternative use for surplus - no additional specialist spaces are required at Willow Fields and no evidence of additional community demand. Potential uses could be rental to suitable tenant. Hylton Red House - Surplus distributed throughout the school therefore no potential to redesignate classrooms.

Cross cluster issue - No cross sector or cross cluster issues

Distance - Travel distances would be shortened for many pupils.

Major roads - no issues with major roads.

Competition - Options 1 & 5 would have the same end result as would options 2, 3 & 4. Options 1 & 2 would require a competition to be held whereby proposals are invited from potential providers for the proposed school. (The LA may also publish their own proposals as part of the competition). Options 3, 4 & 5 would not require a competition.

- The responses to consultation show strongly that Willow Fields has more of an affinity with the Hylton Red House community rather than Southwick. Previous reviews have coupled Willow Fields with Southwick and there has been strong resistance from Willow Fields.

Proposal:

A single school serving the Hylton Red House and Witherwack communities be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement.

***Note** - The main driver for School Place Planning for the Future was to address surplus places but, in developing solutions within this cluster, Hylton Red House Nursery has been included in options, and subsequently in the proposal. This offers a strategic solution for the area and would establish provision in one new school, with purpose built facilities.*

Surplus places removed:

If this proposal is adopted, the total surplus places removed in the cluster by 2013 would be:

Hylton Red House	7
Willow Fields	154
Total	161

3.4.2 **Castle View cluster:**

Synopsis of options appraisal for Bexhill and Town End Farm:

Community - Could be delivered at new school.

Buildings - The repair backlog for TEF is significantly higher than the average in the city; the repair backlog at Bexhill is just above the average.

Previous actions - Both schools have remodelled accommodation to create specialist teaching bases.

Alternative use for surplus - no additional specialist spaces are required at either school and no evidence of additional community demand.

Cross cluster issue - No cross sector or cross cluster issues

Competition - Options 2, 3 & 4 would have the same end result. Option 2 would require a competition to be held. Options 3 & 4 would not require a competition.

- A single school serving the Town End Farm community would be a good long term solution and provide a new school to serve the locality. This could be achieved by options 2, 3 or 4.
- The relatively new soft federation needs to be embedded before a longer term solution is implemented.

Proposal:

Reduce PAN at Bexhill Primary from 48 to 30 in two phases and re-model and re-align the net capacity of the school. In the longer term, a single school serving the community be established, on the most appropriate site, in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales

Surplus places removed:

If this proposal is adopted, the total surplus places removed in the cluster by 2013 would be:

Bexhill /Town End Farm	126
Castletown	63
Hylton Castle	203
Total	392

3.4.3 Monkwearmouth cluster:

Synopsis of options appraisal:

Community - Can be delivered at other facilities within the locality

Buildings - Despite investment in recent years has highest backlog of repairs of all primary schools in the City

Previous actions - reduced classrooms from 14 to 9 and still not a long term solution

Specialist bases - In excess of what would be required in a modern 1 FE school. Utility costs are 15.6% higher than the average for the city.

Alternative use for surplus - no additional specialist spaces are required and no evidence of additional community demand. Potential uses could be rental to suitable tenant.

Cross cluster issue - Feeder school for Monkwearmouth.

Distance - 95% travel up to 1.5 miles to Grange Park currently, 97% would travel up to 1.5 miles if they attend Southwick, 90% would travel up to 1.5 miles if they attend Redby, 83% would travel up to 1.5 miles if they attend Dame Dorothy.

Major roads - 2 major roads - Thompson Road and Newcastle Road. Crossing patrols in place and would be reviewed as appropriate.

Seaburn Dene – while Seaburn Dene Primary has high surpluses it should be noted that the current number on roll is 232 pupils, at this time a viable number. Removing the surplus accommodation as has been proposed would reduce the current surplus % from 38% to 7% by 2010. It is however acknowledged that

further monitoring and review will need to take place in the future if the position at Seaburn Dene Primary does not improve if pupil numbers continue to fall.

- Option 1 would not provide a long term solution i.e. the surplus in the cluster would be 14% in 2010 and would rise to 20% by 2013.
- Option 1 for Grange Park Primary would leave 23% surplus in 2010/11 rising to 28% in 2013/14.
- Governors of Grange Park Primary have put forward their own Option 3. This Option has been considered but would actually result in the same conclusion as that put forward in Children's Services Option 1.
- The options appraisal points to the solution for this cluster being Option 2 which includes closure of Grange Park.
- The % for the cluster would reduce from the projected 24% to 5% in 2010 if Option 2 is adopted.
- However, the new Southwick Primary school is opening in very close proximity this academic year. As Southwick is named as one of the receiving schools under the closure option it would be prudent to allow time to quantify the affect of the new school on the position of schools in the area, as well as the general surplus place position within this cluster.

Proposal:

Implement the PAN reductions and remodel accommodation in line with these at:

Dame Dorothy Primary School Reduce PAN from 30 to 25

Redby Primary School Reduce PAN from 60 to 45

Seaburn Dene Primary School - Reduce PAN from 45 to 25

At Grange Park School, re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity with existing PAN

Across the cluster, monitor and review the surplus position annually and within the next

2 – 3 years formulate proposals in light of emerging trends and PSfC

Surplus places removed:

If this proposal is adopted, the total surplus places removed in the cluster by 2013 would be:

Grange Park	39
Seaburn Dene	105
Redby	12
Dame Dorothy	70
Fulwell Junior	8
Total	234

3.4.4 Houghton cluster:

Synopsis of options appraisal for Bernard Gilpin and Gillas Lane:

Community - Neither school is used by the community.

Buildings - The backlog for repairs for Bernard Gilpin are significantly lower than the average, those for Gillas Lane are significantly higher than the average.

Gillas Lane has early years provision and a cooking kitchen Bernard Gilpin does not have these provisions but has the capacity to be developed if necessary.

Houghton Nursery offers full wraparound.

Previous actions - The net capacity at Gillas Lane has not been reduced to take account of falling numbers. Bernard Gilpin net capacity has been reduced and teaching accommodation redesignated in recent years.

Alternative use for surplus - No additional specialist spaces are required at either school and no evidence of additional community demand. If Gillas Lane closed or amalgamated with Bernard Gilpin kitchen facilities would need to be established and early years provision would need to be considered.

Cross cluster issue - No cross sector or cross cluster issues.

Class size - concerns were expressed by both schools about the increase in class size.

Competition - Options 1 & 2 would have the same end result. Option 2 would require a competition to be held.

- Given the availability of places at Bernard Gilpin and the good condition of the building, as well as its close proximity to Gillas Lane and Houghton Nursery makes options 1 or 2 the most viable in addressing the surplus place issues in this cluster. There would be costs associated with the development of the facilities but these should be balanced against the savings in investment in realigning net capacities at both schools and capital and recurrent funding. Funding would be directed to education of pupils instead of maintaining two buildings.
- If option 3 was to be adopted it would reduce the surplus position to 10% but that would potentially increase if numbers continue to fall. It would not provide a long term solution, nor would it be economically sound to have two schools in such close proximity operating with significantly reduced rolls.

Proposal:

Close Gillas Lane Primary and name Bernard Gilpin Primary as the receiving school, to be implemented in line with admissions and capacity of receiving school

Surplus places removed:

If this proposal is adopted, the total surplus places removed in the cluster by 2013 would be:

Gillas Lane/Bernard Gilpin	140
Burnside	35
East Rainton	31
Total	206

3.4.5 **Hetton cluster:**

Synopsis of options appraisal:

Community - There would be no impact on community use as Hetton is not used by the community and non-specialist areas are used by the community at Eppleton.

Buildings - Hetton Primary is a typical 'clasp' design building and has one of the highest backlog of repairs in the city. Vehicular access is restricted at Hetton Primary. The backlog of repairs for Eppleton is relatively low and the building is in good condition.

Previous actions - The net capacity at Eppleton was reduced in 2001 from 280 to its current 199, with a reduction from 10 to 7 class bases. Both schools have reorganised teaching bases and have specialist bases for pupils e.g. library.

Alternative use for surplus - no additional specialist spaces are required at either school or no evidence of additional community demand. If the net capacity at Hetton Primary is reduced to 105 this would result in the reduction of teaching bases to 3.5; at Eppleton a reduction in net capacity to 140 would result in the teaching bases being reduced to 5. In both schools this would mean organising into mixed age classes. If the early years provision currently available at Hetton Nursery was to replicated at both schools this would reduce the surplus capacity but would demand considerable capital expenditure.

Cross cluster issue - No cross sector or cross cluster issues.

Class size - concerns were expressed by both primary schools about the increase in class sizes.

Competition - Options 2, 4 & 5 would have the same end result. Option 2 would require a competition to be held. Options 4 & 5 would not require a competition.

- A new school to replace Eppleton, Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery would complete the regeneration of schools in the Hetton/Eppleton area.
- If Hetton Nursery closed and early years provision was established at Eppleton and Hetton Primary the costs associated with the development of the facilities, coupled with the additional recurrent costs, would be not make this an economical option.

Proposal:

A single school be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement

***Note** - The main driver for School Place Planning for the Future was to address surplus places but, in developing solutions within this cluster, Hetton Nursery has been included in options, and subsequently in the proposal. This offers a strategic solution for the area and would establish 0 -11 provision in one new school, with purpose built facilities and, as stated above, would complete the regeneration of schools in the area.*

Surplus places removed:

If this proposal is adopted, the total surplus places removed in the cluster by 2013 would be:

Eppleton/Hetton	140
Total	140

- 3.5 The impact on the surplus position by 2013 if all these proposals were to be implemented would be a reduction of 1,133 places. Coupled with the removal of an estimated 1,000 surplus places planned at other schools this would reduce the surplus place position in the primary sector to approximately 6% by 2013.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The consultation on possible restructuring of primary school provision began informally in November 2007 with discussions between officers and schools. The two separate phases of formal consultation were carried out

in May/June 2008 and in October /November 2008. The views of consultees in the first phase were used to influence and add to the options put forward in the second phase.

- 5.2 There are clear examples of where the outcome of consultation affected the options put forward in the second phase and more particularly the proposals now recommended.
- 5.3 Stage 4 consultation meetings have taken place between 23-26 February 2009. The deadline for responses is 20 March 2009. The responses to consultation on the proposals will be reported to Cabinet at their 8 April 2009 meeting.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 Members are recommended to offer views on this stage of the School Place Planning for the Future process.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Cabinet Agenda 14 March 2007
Cabinet Agenda 25 July 2007
Cabinet briefing 8 November 2008
DCSF letter of 25 October to Local Authorities
Primary Strategy for Change - guidance from DCSF 7 December 2007
Cabinet report 13 February 2008
Cabinet report 26 June 2008
Cabinet report 9 July 2008
Cabinet report 8 October 2008
Cabinet report 3 December 2008
Cabinet report 11 February 2009
- 7.2 Background papers are available from the contact officer below.

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